

The *Orden de oraciones de mes arreo* (Ferrara 1555) and a *Bakasah* composed by Abraham Usque *

Aron di Leone LEONI
Siegfried HERZFELD

1. THE VOLUME IN THE COLLECTION OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY

The British Library owns the only known copy of a Spanish prayer-book, printed by Abraham Usque in 1555: the *Orden de oraciones de / mes arreo*.¹

The volume, in 8°, is printed in Gothic type (from the same font used for the famous *Biblia en lengua española*), and was originally made up of 182 leaves [+ one section comprising the title page and the Prologue (on its verso), the index (*Tabla*, ff. *ii^r-*iiii^r) + a gathering with the Bakashot בַּקָּשׁוֹת, (unnumbered folios 1-12^r)² + five gatherings³ with the הושענות (Hoshaanot, *Osannas*) for Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles (ff. i^r-xliv^v), and the service for the

* We are deeply indebted to Dr Ilana Tahan of the British Library, Hebrew Section, for her precious advice.

¹ The complete title is: *ORDEN DE ORACIONES DE / Mes arreo .S. [= saber] sin boltar de / vna a otra parte. / Y LA ORDEN DE / HANUCAH / Purim, y Pascuas de Pesah / Sebuoth, y Sucoth, con / mucha diligentia en-/ mendada. / Estampado por yndustria y despesa / de Abraham Usque. / En Ferrara 12. de Setembro 1555*. See figure 1.

² Folios 5^r -7^v are missing from the volume at the British Library.

³ The five gatherings are marked, at the bottom of (some) pages: «Bb ... Ff». Only some folios are numbered (on the top).

«ayuno de la congregacion» (ff. xliii^r-xlvi^v)⁴ + several unnumbered folios added to the Saturday prayer, when the book had already been printed according to its original layout.]⁵

Unfortunately, the volume preserved in London is incomplete and the entire part devoted to daily and Saturday prayers is missing. We surmise that a previous owner had it bound separately in order to create an easier-to-handle pocket book to be used for daily and Saturday services, while the other, extant part of the book was to be used on Rosh-Hodesh⁶ and on Holidays.

The only information available on the missing part of the book is derived from the index (extant in the volume at the British Library), from the Prologue (which we publish *infra*) and from several reprints.

The section with the Hoshaanoth and the prayers for the public fasts («ayunos de la congregacion») were ostensibly printed in an addendum, after the other parts of the Siddur had already been completed: in fact, these prayers are not mentioned in the *Tabla* (*index*). Furthermore the page numbering of this addendum follows a different order,⁷ not consistent with the rest of the book.⁸

At first we were wondering whether these sections belonged originally to a different, unknown volume, but we later came to the conclusion that they were conceived as an addendum to Usque's *Orden de oraciones* proper. In fact, there are in the Hoshaanoth several cross-references to folio 161 of this book where the *Halel Grande* (Hallel Ha-Gadol) is actually found.

Each page has (*circa*) twenty eight lines of text, and a heading indicating the name of the prayer and the occasion when it was to be recited. The text is almost exclusively in Spanish and in Latin characters. Nevertheless, the titles of some prayers are rendered in Hebrew, such as the סדר של הושענא רבא (*Orden de Hoshaana Rabbah*).

⁴ The term «ayuno de la congregacion» is used here to distinguish between the official fast days, observed by the community, and the «ayunos de solo» undertaken by individuals for devotion or penitence. The section is marked at the bottom of some leaves «Ff».

⁵ As we shall see, this part of the book is missing. We learn about the added folios from the prologue, which we publish *infra*.

⁶ Rosh-Hodesh = first day(s) of the new month.

⁷ The additional gatherings are marked at the bottom of (some) pages: Bb - Ff and comprise folios i-xlvi.

⁸ The extant, original gatherings of the Siddur are marked x-z, and comprise leaves clix-clxxxii.

2. THE *ORDEN DE ORACIONES DE MES ARREO* AND THE CONTEMPORANEOUS LITURGICAL WORKS IN SPANISH VERNACULAR

The *Orden de oraciones de mes arreo* is the second known liturgical work ⁹ published by Abraham Usque in vernacular, or alternately the third one if we are to count the Spanish Psalter, ¹⁰ which is a part of the Bible but was published for liturgical and meditational use. It is possible, however, that in the same period other prayer-books (or reprints of the first ones) came to light, but were lost without a trace in the ensuing centuries.

As far as it is known, up until the year 1555, the former Marranos of Ferrara who were still unfamiliar with Hebrew could rely for the service for the Three Holydays (שלוש רגלים) either on Yomtob Atias' *Libro de Oracyones de Todo el año*, ¹¹ or on Isac Cavallero's *Orden de oraciones segundo el uso ebrèu en lengua / ebraica y vulgular español* ¹² and its related editions, ¹³ which comprised the essential part of the liturgy for the Holidays.

The *Libro de Oracyones* by Yomtob Atias was almost omni-comprehensive, but had the drawback of being rather bulky and difficult to handle on account of its many cross references, so that former

⁹ In 1553 Abraham Usque printed a Maḥazor for the New Year and for the Day of Atonement. The complete title is: מחזור (= Maḥazor) / *De Roshasanah y Ki-/pur trasladado en es-/pañol y de nuevo emē/dado por yndustria y / diligēcia de Abraham Usque / Bē Selomoh / Usque Portugues y / estampado em su casa / y a su costa / En Ferrara 15 d / Elul / 5313.*

¹⁰ First (1553) edition: *Psalterium / de Daud en Hebrayco dicho Thehyim, trasla=/dado cō toda fielidad verbo de verbo / del / Hebrayco: y / Repartido / como se / deue / leer / Per cada dia del / mes segun vso / de los An=/tiguos. / Estampado en Ferrara a. 15. / de Noviembre 1553*; second (1544) edition: *PSALTERO / de Daud trasladado en / español cō toda fielidad verbo de verbo / de su verdade-/ra origen: y / Repartido / como se / deue / leer / Per cada dia del / mes segun vso / de los An=/tiguos. / Estampado en Ferrara a 15 / de Henero 1554.*

¹¹ The complete title is: *LIBRO / DE ORACYONES / de todo el año traduzido / del Hebrayco de verbo a ver/bo de antiguos exem/plares, por quanto / los ympressos / fasta a qui / estan errados, con muchas / cosas acrescentadas de / nuevo segun por la / siguiente tabla se / muestra / 5312 [=1552] De la Criacion / a 14 de Sivan.*

¹² The complete title of this Siddur is: /סדור תפלות/כמנהג הספרדים הועתק מלשון עברי / יצחק ב"ר שם טוב קאבאלירו בויניציה / *Orden de oraciones / segundo el uso ebrèu en lengua / ebraica y vulgular español: / traduzido por el dotor Isac fijo / de Don Sem tob Cavallero: / EN VENECIA.*

¹³ On a third, hitherto unknown, bilingual Siddur printed in Venice by Isac Cavallero in or around 1552, see A. di Leone LEONI, «La presenza Sefardita a Venezia intorno alla metà del Cinquecento. I Libri e gli Uomini», *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 67/1-2 (2001) pp. 35-112.

Marranos, still unfamiliar with Jewish liturgy, found it difficult to follow a synagogue service using this prayer book.¹⁴ The *Sedur de Oraciones de mes*, published by Jomtob Atias in 1552, had probably been sold out and was no longer available.

The bilingual *Orden de oraciones* by Isac Cavallero comprised the Amidah (עמידה) and the additional prayer (מוסף) for the Holydays (ff. 277-303). At the present state of research we do not know whether and how widely the Spanish Siddurim printed in Venice were available and adopted for ritual use in Ferrara before 1555.

In the title of his prayer-book, Abraham Usque claimed to have presented the prayers in a plain and user-friendly way, without the necessity of having to leaf through the book to find the continuation of a particular prayer during the service. Hence the name of the Siddur: *arreo* .S. [= *saber*] *sin boltar de / vna a otra parte*. Usque had already dealt with this problem in his מחזור (*Maḥazor*), where a special chapter is devoted to the task of explaining how to follow the repetition of the *hamidot* in the Synagogue and how and when to answer to the Hazan (cantor).¹⁵

The Siddur *arreo* comprises the service for Hanukah and Purim. It included also the essential parts of the prayers for the three Moadim, which the Portuguese called *Tres Pascuas: Pascua de Pão Azimo, Pascua de Cabanas* and *Pascua de Sebuot*. It did not include the prayers for the New Year and the Day of Atonement for which Usque's Spanish מחזור was available.

In 1553, in his Prologue to the Spanish Psalter Abraham Usque stressed that he was a member of the team that translated the Bible in cooperation with eminent scholars.¹⁶ He also claimed to have introduced revisions and changes of the text of the translation. His statements might reveal previous disagreements with other editors or could

¹⁴ It was the merit of Herman P. Salomon to clearly establish that the Spanish vulgarisations printed in Ferrara were primarily conceived for synagogue use. See H. P. SALOMON, «Was There a Traditional Spanish Translation of Sephardi Prayers Before 1552?», *The American Sephardi* 6 (1973) pp. 79-90: p. 81.

¹⁵ מחזור, f. 208v and ff.: «Orden de continuar ... siguiendo con el Hazan la hamida ...».

¹⁶ Cf. I. M. HASSÁN, «Dos introducciones de la Biblia de Ferrara», in *Introducción a la Biblia de Ferrara. Actas del Simposio Internacional sobre la Biblia de Ferrara. Sevilla, 25-28 de noviembre de 1991*, ed. I. M. HASSÁN (Madrid 1994) pp. 13-66: p. 46.

simply express the desire to faithfully retain the meaning of the sacred texts.¹⁷ An analogous –and hitherto overlooked– statement is found in the title page of the מַחֲזִיר from which it appears that the translation and the amendments (and not only the printing) were the fruit of his work: *trasladado en español y de nuevo emendado por yndustria y diligēcia de Abraham Usque*.

A hint to new amendments is also found in the title of the Siddur with which we are dealing here.¹⁸ In 1555, however, Abraham Usque was already an established publisher and he did not feel the need to stress the importance of his personal contribution. Neither did he need to explain the practice, already adopted in the *Biblia*¹⁹ and in several prayer-books, both in Ferrara and in Venice,²⁰ of translating the Hebrew text word by word.

In his Prologue «al Lector» the publisher stresses his desire to provide a better and easier-to-use book, which would obviate [at least in part] the necessity to frequently turn the pages to find the continuation of certain prayers, as it had happened theretofore. Abraham Usque reported to have acceded to the request of an anonymous friend of his, described as «his lord» [and the probable sponsor of the undertaking]. In so doing the publisher hoped to provide a much desired solution to a widely felt need:

Movido curioso²¹ Lector,

por ruego e devocion de un amigo y Señor mio a enprimir el presente libro de Oraciones arreo por mejor y mas claro estilo que fasta aqui por seer muy fastidioso el boltar de vna a otra parte, Determine obedecerle viendo quāto a todo seria agradable. Assi que a su requesta me puse a estamparlo y por que my yntento en el principio fue remitir en la oracion de Sabath dos vezes a la cotediana, puse ciertos señales los quales no sierven por que torne arrehazer lo que remetia fino el de volta en folio xiii. Lo que causo fallarene algunas fojas sin numero.

¹⁷ A. di Leone LEONI, «A hitherto unknown edition of the Spanish Psalter by Abraham Usque (Ferrara 1554)», *Sefarad* 61 (2001) pp. 127-136.

¹⁸ «Con mucha diligentia enmendada». See note 1.

¹⁹ I. M. HASSÁN, «Dos introducciones de la Biblia de Ferrara», pp. 40-41.

²⁰ A. di Leone LEONI, «La presenza Sefardita a Venezia», pp. 41-43.

²¹ «Curioso» = careful, inquisitive.

Fallaran tambien en algunas margenes «En la Synagoga» y «fasta Aqui»²² que quiere dezir que lo que estaa en medio no pueden dezir sino en casa de la Oracion.

Y por que en el presente libro ay ciertos capitulos, que parecen no servir de Oraciones, sepan que los ordenaron N[uest]ros sabios וְלִיָּהּ por que todo hombre es obligado leer en quatro partes de la Ley .s. [saber:] Micra, Ghemara [sic!]²³ Misnah, Barietha²⁴ de do lo sacaron a fin que leendolos aqui (por que todos no pueden todo) saliesen de la obligacion.

Bene Valle.

3. THE *ORDEN DE ORACIONES* AND ITS CONTENT

At the beginning of the *Tabla*²⁵ Usque calls attention to some passages selected in order to permit worshippers to fulfil the obligation of studying every day a (symbolic) portion of Torah and Rabbinic literature, before the commencement of the service proper:

§ Micra. Y fablo .A. a Moseh ²⁶	(f.)vj
§ Ghemara. Aabaye era ordenan[do] ²⁷	vij
y conficion del saffumerio ²⁸	xlix
fasta bendezira su pueblo con paz	lj

²² In smaller characters in the book.

²³ *Ghemara* (instead of *Guemara*): the rendering of the «ג» of גמרה with «gh» was probably due to Italian influence: must we assume that Abraham Usque employed Italian worker(s) for the composition?

²⁴ *Barietha* (= *Baraita*, Aramaic: בריתא plur.: בריתות) from *Baraya*, בריה = 'external, not belonging to'). The term is used to indicate an הלכה חיצונית (*Halakhah Hizonah*, litt.: 'external rule') not included in the Mishnah (as codified by Jehudah ha-Nasi), but handed down by halakhik tradition. See M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature* (London - New York 1903) *sub voce*.

²⁵ Some pages of the gathering containing the *Tabla* are marked at their bottom with an asterisk.

²⁶ As we have pointed out, this section of the book is missing from the volume in the British Library. It is therefore difficult to state which of the many biblical passages starting with these words was chosen by Abraham Usque.

²⁷ *Talmud Babli, Yoma*, f. 33a: Abaye (אביי) stated the order of the daily Altar service according to Mosaic tradition and to the opinion of Abba Shaul.

²⁸ «Conficion de saffumerio»: the preparation of the incense in the Temple (פְּטִיחַ הַקְטֹרֶת), *Kerithoth* 6a. According to the index this passage was found at folio «li» (51r) of the *Orden de Oraciones de mes arreo*, before the prayer «sobre nos para loar» (עָלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח).

§ Misnah desde: Qual este el lugar ²⁹	vii
fasta: no era comido salvo affado	
y: Con que encenderan ³⁰	lxx
§ Barietha, Rebi Ysmahel dizien ³¹	x

We may possibly assume that Abraham Usque modified the transcription of the word בריתא (*Baraita*) intentionally into *Barietha*, probably exploiting the interchangeability and similarity of the labial consonants «B» and «V» in Spanish pronunciation, in order to suggest to his readers the –perfectly correct– idea of studying a variety of rabbinical passages.

As it can be gathered from the *Tabla*, the compiler of the Siddur abridged this part of the service which serves as an introduction to the prayers proper. Usque was well aware of the difficulties, encountered by former Marranos recently returned to their ancient faith, to follow the sometime long and complicated subtleties of Jewish liturgy and decided to provide a simplified version of the Siddur. We can consider this as another aspect of the effort, undertaken by many scholars, to reintroduce the newcomers to the practice of Judaism.

In the *Tabla* the description of the above passages is followed by a list of Bakashoth (Poetical Supplications) for which the page numbers are not specified, as these hymns were printed in a (later inserted?) gathering composed of unnumbered leaves.

The index continues with a detailed list of daily and Saturday prayers. ³² This is followed by the description of prayers for different holidays, as stated above. A collection of blessings for various occasions of everyday life is provided at the end of the book. There is no colophon and no Register of gatherings.

At the end of the last page, after some blessings to be recited at the *Beth Ha-Haim* (the Judeo-Spanish euphemism for cemetery), we find a short sentence with a few words of gratitude to the Lord, for permitting the redactor to bring his work to a successful conclusion:

²⁹ *Mishnah Zebahim*, chapter 5: «Which are the places where the sacrifices were offered.»

³⁰ *Talmud Babli, Shabbath*, f. 20a: במה מדליקין ובמה אין מדליקין.

³¹ «Rebi Ysmahel dizien»: this passage is derived from the *Sifra* (Aram.: ספרא, collection of midrashim to the Book of Leviticus) and is included in all Siddurim. In this well-known *Baraita* Rabbi Ishmael stated that the Torah may be expounded by thirteen methods.

³² As we have pointed out, this section is no longer extant in the volume at the British Library.

«Acabosse a loor del Dio ³³ la presente Orden de Oraciones. A 6 de Tisri. 5316.» ³⁴

As in many other Sephardic prayer books, a place of honour is reserved to the *Bakashah* (בקשה): כל ברואי מעלה ומטה («Todos criados de arriba y abaxo»), particularly popular among the Marranos returned to Judaism as the poem reaffirms the unicity and unalterable unity of God. ³⁵

We compared the *Bakasah*, as it appears in Usque's Siddur, with the text of the same prayer in the *Libro de Oraciones de todo el año* by Yomtob Atias, and we found the wording of the translation to be identical. However, the arrangement of lines is different. ³⁶

For a couple of blessings Usque provided the «Hebrew text» transliterated in Latin characters in order to allow former Marranos, still unacquainted with the language of their ancestors, to take part in the service and pronounce these prayers correctly. On these and on other analogous transcriptions found in different prayer-books, we are planning to refer soon in this same review.

The Ferrara vulgarisations served as the model for the prayer-books published in the Western Sephardic Communities of Amsterdam, Hamburg and London in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. ³⁷ Among these works the *Orden de oraciones de mes arreo* was perhaps the most popular and the most frequently reprinted (sometimes with addendums and modifications). ³⁸ Particular mention deserve the 1612 and 1618 Amsterdam editions, published respectively by the Neveh Shalom ³⁹ and by the Beth

³³ «Dio» (instead of «Dios» as usual in Spanish): rigorously singular, to stress the detachment from the past, when the Marranos were compelled to bow in front of sculptures and paintings of Christian Saints.

³⁴ «This prayer-book was completed, for the glory of the Lord, on Tishri 6, 5316.»

³⁵ See the fundamental study by H. P. SALOMON, «Was there a Spanish Translation...», pp. 83-84.

³⁶ See Figures 2a and 2b.

³⁷ Cf. C. ROTH, «The Marrano Press at Ferrara», *Modern Language Review* 37 (1943) pp. 307-17: p. 308.

³⁸ See Figures 7 and 8.

³⁹ S. SEELIGMANN, *Bibliographie en historie, bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der eerste Sephardim in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1927) p. 40; I. S. RÉVAH, «Fragments retrouvés de quelques éditions amstelodamoises de la version espagnole du rituel juif», *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15 (1981) pp. 108-111. Cf. H. P. SALOMON, *Portrait of a New Christian: Fernão Álvares Melo (1569-1632)* (Paris 1982) pp. 150-151.

Yahacob Congregations ⁴⁰ and the 1619 Venetian edition. ⁴¹

The fact that these editions are extremely rare strengthens the assumption that some earlier reprints may have completely disappeared. ⁴²

4. THE NEW BAKASHAH

With an original procedure Abraham Usque inserted into his Siddur (unnumbered folios 11r-11v) a new prayer by which he asked the Lord to put an end to the sufferings of Israel, to rise up a scion of David, and to restore His people to its ancient glory and dignity.

The Author wanted to provide a reassuring answer to the anxieties and hopes of his generation. The physical and spiritual pains of his contemporaries are not described in the prayer as they were familiar to his readers and were part of their personal experience.

Likewise the Jews who left Spain in 1492, also Abraham Usque's contemporary exiles, i.e. the Marranos who had escaped from Portugal in order to return to Judaism (mainly after 1531), ⁴³ considered their departure from the Iberian Peninsula as the most catastrophic event to befall the Jewish people since the destruction of the second Temple. They continued to cherish the deeply rooted cultural values of their erstwhile homeland. ⁴⁴ The agony of their perilous and heartbreaking flight from the Peninsula was devastating. Most of the recent refugees

⁴⁰ ORDEN DE / ORACIONES DE MES / ARREO SIN BOLTAR / de una à otra parte. / Y LA ORDEN DE HANU-cah, Purim y Pascuas de Pesah, Sebuoth, y / Succoth; con mucha diligencia emendada. / Y las Bakassot al principio en ladino / con la pronunçiaçion Hebrayca escrita / en Hespannol / Impresso a despesa de la Santa Hebra de / Talmud Torah, del Kahal Kados Bet / Yaahkob en Amstradama: / Anno 5378.

⁴¹ ORDEN DE / ORACIONES DE MES / ARREO .S. SIN BOLTAR / de vna à otra parte, / Y LA ORDEN DE / Hanucah, Purim, y Pascuas de Pesah, Se-/buoth y Succoth: con mucha dili-/gentia emendada. / Y les añadimos enel las Osanod / IN VENETIA MDCXIX / Estampado por orden dell Illustriss. Sig. / Pietro e Lorenzo Bragadini / Con licenza de los Superiores.

⁴² C. ROTH, *The Marrano Press at Ferrara*, p. 309.

⁴³ Samuel USQUE, *Consolaçam as Tribulações de Israel Composto por Samuel Usque, Empreço en Ferrara en casa de Abraham aben Usque 5313 da criação, am d. 7 de setembro* (repr. Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon 1989): *Dialogo Terceiro*, § 31: *Dos que sayrom e saem que de Portugal desdo año 5291 [1531]*.

⁴⁴ R. BONFIL, «The Legacy of Sephardic Jewry in Historical writing», in *Moreshet Sepharad. The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. H. BEINART (Jerusalem 1992) pp. 461-478: pp. 464-465, 468-469.

regarded it as a supreme sacrifice offered to the Lord and wondered whether this extreme proof of devotion might help them in obtaining the Divine pardon.

The exiles raised questions about the rationale and the significance of their recent history and the causes of the tragic situation of a great part of their Nation, who were entrapped and persecuted in the Peninsula.

The former-conversos were imbued by widespread messianic hopes and were strongly influenced by the mystic doctrines emanating from Safed, which gave cosmic and human significance to the exile and to their hopes of redemption.⁴⁵

All these elements are found in Samuel Usque's *Consolaçam*⁴⁶ published by Abraham Usque in 1553, only two years before the appearance of *Orden de oraciones* herein described.

As Robert Bonfil has clearly stated, Samuel's *Consolaçam*, together with other contemporary works, fulfilled, *inter alia*, the function of providing the former-conversos with the consciousness of a modern Sephardi identity away from the Peninsula.⁴⁷

As expressed on the title page of Samuel Usque's *Consolaçam*, this author attempted to convey a message of hope to his afflicted contemporaries in order to mitigate their anguish.

All through his work Samuel repeatedly explained that the manifold, continuous sufferings of Israel were the result of repeated transgressions, every punishment being the immediate result of a specific sin.⁴⁸ In this rationale a sin was always followed by a punishment of proportional intensity, but never so strong and decisive to jeopardize the very existence of Israel. Furthermore, every punishment finds its explanation in specific prophecies, carefully quoted after the narration of each tribulation.

⁴⁵ Y. BAER, «Ha Tenu'ah ha-Meshihit bi-Sfarad bi-Tkufat ha-Gerush (The Messianic movement in Spain in the period of the expulsion of the Jews)», *Zion* 5 (1933) pp. 61-67; H. H. BEN SASSON, «The Social Ideals of Jewry at the End of the Middle Ages», in *A History of the Jewish People*, ed. H. H. BEN SASSON (Cambridge, Mass. 1976) pp. 691-723; pp. 691-701.

⁴⁶ S. USQUE, *Consolaçam*, pp. 241r-281v.

⁴⁷ R. BONFIL, «The Legacy of Sephardic Jewry», pp. 463-469.

⁴⁸ Y. H. YERUSHALMI, «A Jewish Classic in the Portuguese Language», in *Estudo introdutório to Samuel USQUE, Consolação as Tribulações de Israel, Edição de Ferrara 1553* (repr. Lisbon 1989) pp. 73-77.

According to Samuel Usque's interpretation, the Inquisition was introduced in Portugal by king John III as a consequence of the fact that:

«The New Christians were immersed in pursuit of power, wealth and the honours of high office, and were deceived by it to the point that they had nearly forgotten their ancient faith and lost the fear of the Wellspring from which all life emanates, because of their vast riches, high offices and honours that they had acquired in the Kingdom [of Portugal].»⁴⁹

Because of their assimilation to Christians, the Men of the Nation became guilty of idolatry and were compelled to worship strange gods made of wood and stone. The Inquisition, depicted by Samuel Usque as a horrible monster, was the instrument chosen by the Lord to perform the punishment of this transgression according to the biblical prophecy of Deuteronomy 28:

«And the Lord shall scatter you from the one end of the earth unto the other end of the earth⁵⁰ and there you shall serve other gods, which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers...»⁵¹

The cult of strange gods made of wood and stone contained at one time the elements of transgression and punishment. However, the curses listed in the so-called *Parashat Tokhehot* were the last ones recorded in the Torah. They were now completely fulfilled and the sons of Israel had suffered all the misfortunes pronounced by the Lord. The time had therefore come for the end of their tribulations. The final Redemption was at hand but it depended on the wholehearted return of New Christians to Judaism.⁵²

This was the message delivered by Samuel Usque's *Consolaçam*. Abraham Usque picked it up and tacitly used it as an unexpressed preliminary statement to his new *Bakasah*. He rightly assumed that his readers were acquainted with the arguments discussed by Samuel

⁴⁹ Samuel USQUE, *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel, Translated from the Portuguese by M. A. Cohen* (Philadelphia 1977) p. 202.

⁵⁰ S. USQUE, *Consolaçam, Dialogo Terceiro*, § 30, f. 204r: «De um cabo da terra atee Finis Terre». The expression Finisterræ (= Kez ha-arez) was used in the Middle Ages to designate the Kingdom of Portugal, located at the furthestmost «corner» of Europe, facing the Ocean.

⁵¹ Deuteronomy 28, 64-65, quoted by S. USQUE, *Consolaçam*, f. 204r.

⁵² S. USQUE, *Consolaçam, ibid.* Cfr. M. A. COHEN, in his «Introduction» to the English Edition of the *Consolaçam*, pp. 25-26. See Y. H. YERUSHALMI, «A Jewish Classic...», p. 76.

Usque as they had already contended with the same doubts and raised the same fundamental questions about the reasons of their suffering and on the fate of their Nation.

Without any preamble, in his new *Bakasah* Abraham supplicates the Lord to be content with the punishments already inflicted to His people, to redeem the sons of Israel and restore them to their ancient splendour, to re-establish in their midst the glory of the Lord, and to bless them with the enactment of Messianic Age, to show his pity for all the ones who have been faithful to the sacred covenant and spent their lives awaiting for the day of the Redemption.

In a unique hint to the sins of idolatry, Abraham Usque claimed that the sons of Israel (at least those reciting this prayer) had completely cast adrift every idolatric practice and forgotten the cult of depicted images («cosa de pintura»). A more overt reference to Catholic rites was unthinkable in September 1555, at a time when Pope Paul IV had already stepped up the persecutions against the Portuguese Jews of Ancona, where all the former Marranos were arrested and twenty five of them were to die later on the stake.⁵³

We are publishing *in extenso*, in appendix, the text of the *Bakasah Nueva* (New Bakashah) by Abraham Usque, with an English translation.

5. THE ROLE OF ABRAHAM USQUE IN THE FERRARA PRESS AND THE ORIGINS OF HIS JEWISH LEARNING

For many years Abraham Usque has been considered as a simple craftsman. In effect, his contribution to the Sephardic Press of Ferrara was not limited to the work of printing as some authors have suggested. Elena Romero was perhaps the first to ascribe more importance to his role. This scholar realized that Abraham was not only a printer, but also one of the editors of the *Biblia de Ferrara*.⁵⁴ Y. H. Yerushalmi stated that, in effect, Abraham was both printer and publisher as he (at times) employed press workers and editors.⁵⁵ From

⁵³ A. TOAFF, «Nuova luce sui Marrani di Ancona (1556)», in *Studi sull'Ebraismo Italiano in memoria di Cecil Roth*, ed. E. TOAFF (Roma 1974) pp. 261-280; A. di Leone LEONI, «Per una storia della Nazione Portoghese ad Ancona ed a Pesaro», in *L'identità dissimulata. Giudaizzanti iberici nell'Europa cristiana dell'età moderna*, ed. P. C. IOLY ZORATTINI (Firenze 2000) pp. 27-97.

⁵⁴ E. ROMERO, *La creación literaria en lengua sefardí* (Madrid 1992) p. 46.

⁵⁵ Y. H. YERUSHALMI, «A Jewish Classic...», p. 93.

the prologue to the Spanish Psalter we learn that Abraham was also one of the translators of the *Biblia Española*. He also claimed to have corrected and modified some parts of the translation of the Psalms.⁵⁶

As we have seen, Abraham was also the author of a new prayer, introduced in his Siddur.

In his works Usque reveals a profound knowledge of Biblical texts (variously quoted in the *Bakasah*), of Talmudic and Midrashic literature (quoted in the *Prologo* and in the *Tabla*) and of Jewish liturgy (widely displayed in the *Orden de oraciones* and in the מחזור).

It is challenging to wonder where Abraham could acquire his wide learning. From a document kept at the Archives Générales du Royaume in Brussels we learn that one Duarte Pinel⁵⁷ was in Antwerp in or around 1550. Together with other New Christians recently arrived in the Flanders, he tried to obtain a licence to remain in the northern city, in spite of the recent decree of expulsion issued by Charles V.⁵⁸ Duarte Pinel does not appear in another, later, document comprising the names of New Christians living in Antwerp toward the end of 1550. We assume that he was compelled to leave the city. At the present state of research we do not know where Abraham lived between 1550 and 1553, when his name was first associated to the Ferrara Press. Wherever he spent this span of time, it does not seem to be sufficient to acquire such a wide knowledge of Judaism. We are inclined to believe that Abraham probably had developed his acquaintance with Jewish religion before settling in Italy (or in the Levant), towards 1550. As the date of his birth is still unknown, we cannot state, even tentatively, whether and where he had an opportunity to familiarize himself with Hebraic learning.

⁵⁶ A. di Leone LEONI, «A hitherto unknown edition of the Spanish Psalter...».

⁵⁷ This was the Portuguese «baptismal» name of Abraham Usque.

⁵⁸ See A. di Leone LEONI, «The Portuguese Nations in Antwerp and in London towards the middle of the XVIth Century. New documents and interpretations», *The Jewish Quarterly Review* (forthcoming).

APPENDIX

Bakasah Nueva

Sy nuestro Dio, de los males que an passado,
se tuviese por contento y satisfecho
y nos diese nuevo coraçõ ⁵⁹ en n[uest]ro pecho
con mandar nos el buen David profetizado ⁶⁰

If our Lord were [by now] satisfied
with all the tribulations we have already undergone
and would give us new heart in our bosom
by sending us the [Scion of] David as prophetized

Por quan dichoso y bien auenturado
este triste pueblo se fallaria,
viendo en sus dias este dia
de nos tan estunado y desseado

How joyful and fortunate
these sad people would be
if they were to see during their lifetime
this so long awaited and dreamt of day

Mas triste que solo la esperança veo
que nos queda y con ella fenescieron
los que duormen ya con sus pasados

So more sad as I see that only hope is left,
that hope which accompanied our brethren who
rest with their ancestors

Y solo este bien, y este desseo
tenemos nos y tambien ellos tuuieron
por nuestras tam continuas culpas y pecados

This only asset and this hope
we have –and our brethrens had–
because of our continuous sins and guilt

Y pues tu piadoso y Excelente
sabes bien lo que tienes prometido ⁶¹
redimenos que somos, y emos sido
oprobio y desonrra entre la gente ⁶²

⁵⁹ Ezek. 36, 26: «And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit.» Cfr. Deut. 28, 65.

⁶⁰ II Sam. 7, 12-16; 22, 51; Jer. 23, 5; Ezek. 37, 24-25; Ps. 18·51; 89, 4-5.

⁶¹ Lev. 26,42; Mic. 7, 20; Ps. 106, 45.

⁶² Deut. 28, 37; Ezek. 34, 29; Psalms 44, 14-15; 79, 4; 22, 7-9.

And, Thou, Pious and Excellent Lord
thou know well what you promised.
Redeem us who are and have been
ashamed and dishonoured among people

No se acabe en captiuerio la simiente
de Abraham tu amado y tan querido ⁶³
mira este tu pueblo empobrecido
que de tu ley y preceptos biue ausente

Do not let the seed of your beloved
and cherished Abraham end up in bondage
look upon your miserable people living
deprived and far away from your Law and Precepts

y pues esta remicion tan esperada
esperança ⁶⁴ de lo bivos, y los muertos
la as de fazer por ti ⁶⁵ y no por el

as this so eagerly awaited and cherished grace,
by the living and by the dead ones,
grant it for your own sake and not for theirs

Sepa agora toda la gente ⁶⁶ que es criada ⁶⁷
que el que dio la manna en los desiertos
es el Santificador de Ysrael. ⁶⁸

Let all the existing nations know
that He who gave the manna in the desert
is the Sanctifier of Israel

No se acabe en tanta desventura
aqueste primogenito escogido ⁶⁹
que ya no cabe en su memoria y sentido
ydolatria ni cosa de pintura ⁷⁰

Let it not happen that this first chosen
might end in such disgrace
as there is no longer in his memory and in his feelings
any idolatry or painted images

⁶³ Isa. 41, 8; 61, 8-9; Ps. 105, 6.

⁶⁴ Isa. 25, 9. See Samuel Usque's paraphrase of Psalm 126, 2 in *Consolaçam*, f. 281v.

⁶⁵ Isa. 48, 11;

⁶⁶ Ezek. 34, 30; Ibid. 36, 36. Ps. 83, 19.

⁶⁷ This is a possible reference to the popular Bakashah כל בראי מעלה ומטה («Todos criados de arriba y abaxo»). See Figs. 2a, 2b and 3.

⁶⁸ Ezek. 20, 12; 37, 28.

⁶⁹ Ex. 4, 22; Jer. 31, 8-9; Ps. 89, 27.

⁷⁰ Jer. 31, 33.

A ti solo se levanta el Alma pura ⁷¹
 a ti solo pide remedio el afligido
 este tan grande bien de ti nos ha venido
 tu solo nos apartes de tam gran lucura

To you alone the pure soul lifts
 the afflicted ones ask for clemency,
 this great goodness has been received from you
 you alone deliver us from such great madness

Tu eres solo todo nuestro bien
 toda nuestra esperança ⁷² y alegría
 y todo lo de mas es cosa vana ⁷³

You are our only asset
 all our hope and joy.
 Everything else is in vain

Tu es .A. solo de quien
 aun que padescamos noche y dia ⁷⁴
 todo nuestro remedio de ti mana

You are, Lord, the only source
 of our salvation
 even if we are suffering night and day

No passe mas adelante tu furor ⁷⁵
 que bien as secutado en nos tu saña ⁷⁶
 de todas las partidas nos apaña
 ayuntanos tu poderoso y grande señor

May your anger not go further
 as you have already punished us,
 keep us separated from all [wrong] deeds,
 help us, powerful and great Lord

Alcancemos de ti tan gran favor
 buelve senor tu yra a gente estraña ⁷⁷
 a todo el vniuerso desengaña
 y sepan ⁷⁸ que no ay otro supirior

⁷¹ Psalms 25,1; 86, 4; 143, 8.

⁷² Jer. 17, 13.

⁷³ Isa. 44, 9.

⁷⁴ Deut. 28, 66.

⁷⁵ Jer. 30, 24-25 ; Ps. 85, 4.

⁷⁶ Lam. 4, 22.

⁷⁷ Jer. 10, 25; Ps. 79, 6.

⁷⁸ Ezek., 34, 30; Ibid. 36, 23; 37, 28.

May we receive from you this great favour
address out your wrath towards other people.
May the entire universe know
that there is no else greater than You

Todas las maldiciones son compridas ⁷⁹
no ay enuencion de males que no aya sido
y siempre sera biva su memoria:

All the courses have been fulfilled
there is no invention of ill
that has not been performed against us
and its memory will always remain alive

Antes que se acaben nuestras vidas
si tu señor eres servido
da a tu nombre el grande aquesta gloria ⁸⁰

So, before our life is over,
may you be satisfied
to give this glory to your great Name.

⁷⁹ Lam 4, 22; Jer. 30, 24-25.

⁸⁰ Ezek. 36, 22-23; Isa. 48, 11; Ps. 115, 1.

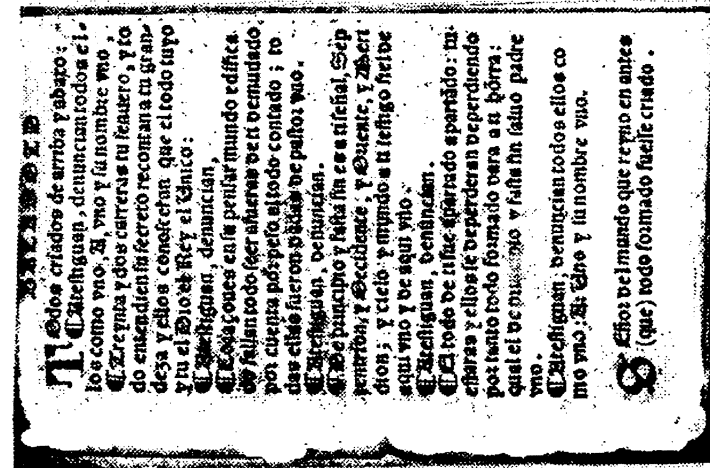


Fig. 2b. Spanish translation of the same Bakashah in Abraham Usque's *Orden de oraciones de mes arreo* (Ferrara 1555).
 Courtesy of the British Library.

¶ Kol berne mahalab.

Modos criados de arriba y abaxo.
 ¶ Deneguan, denuncian, todos
 ellos como vno. Si vno y su nombre vno.
 ¶ Creyuta y dos carreras su leuero, y
 todo entendien su secreto reconan a tu
 grandeza, y ellos conoxtan que el todo
 fuyo y tu el dho el Rey el Unico.
 ¶ Deneguan, denuncian,
 ¶ Cosas qones en su pensar mundo edifi-
 cado fallan todo ser afueras de ti venu-
 dado, por cuenta, por peso el todo con-
 tado: todas ellas fueron vadas de pallo:
 vno.
 ¶ Deneguan, denuncian,
 ¶ De principio y falsa fin es a ti señal, Se-
 penton y occidente, y diente y diente
 don; y cielo y mundo a ti te figo fiel de a
 qui vno y de a qui vno.
 ¶ Deneguan y denuncian,
 ¶ El todo de ti fue apartado apartado;
 tu chasas y ellos se perderan de perdién-
 do: por tanto todo formado para a ti bon-
 ra: qual el de principio y falsa fin falso pa-
 dre vno.
 ¶ Deneguan y denuncian.

Fig. 2a. Vulgarisation of the Bakashah in Yomtov Atias' (*«Todos criados de arriba y abaxo»*) in Yomtov Atias' *Libro de Oraciones de todo el año* (Ferrara 1552).
 Courtesy of Professor Herman Prins Salomon, New York.

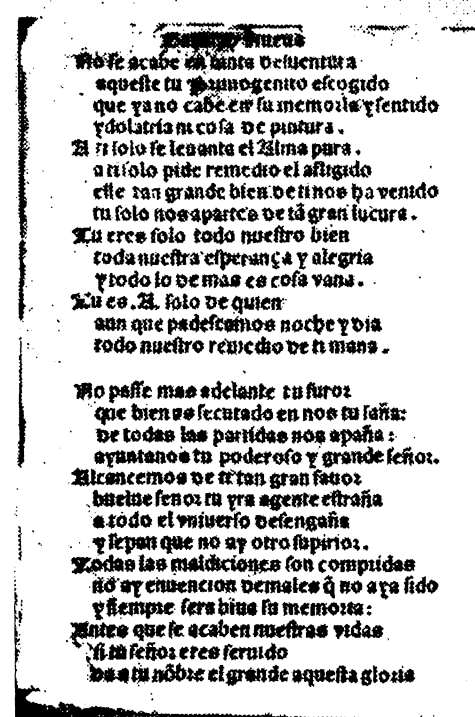
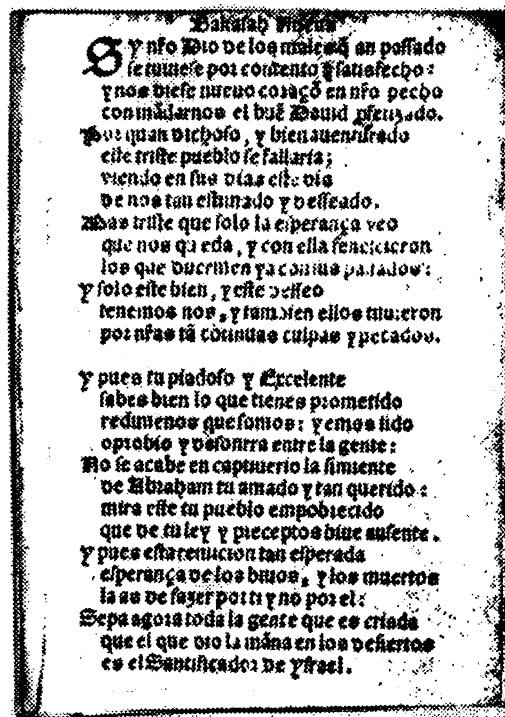


Fig. 4. The *Bakasah Nueva* composed by Abraham Usque. *Orden de oraciones de mes arreo* (Ferrara 1555) (unnumbered folios 11r-11v).

Courtesy of the British Library

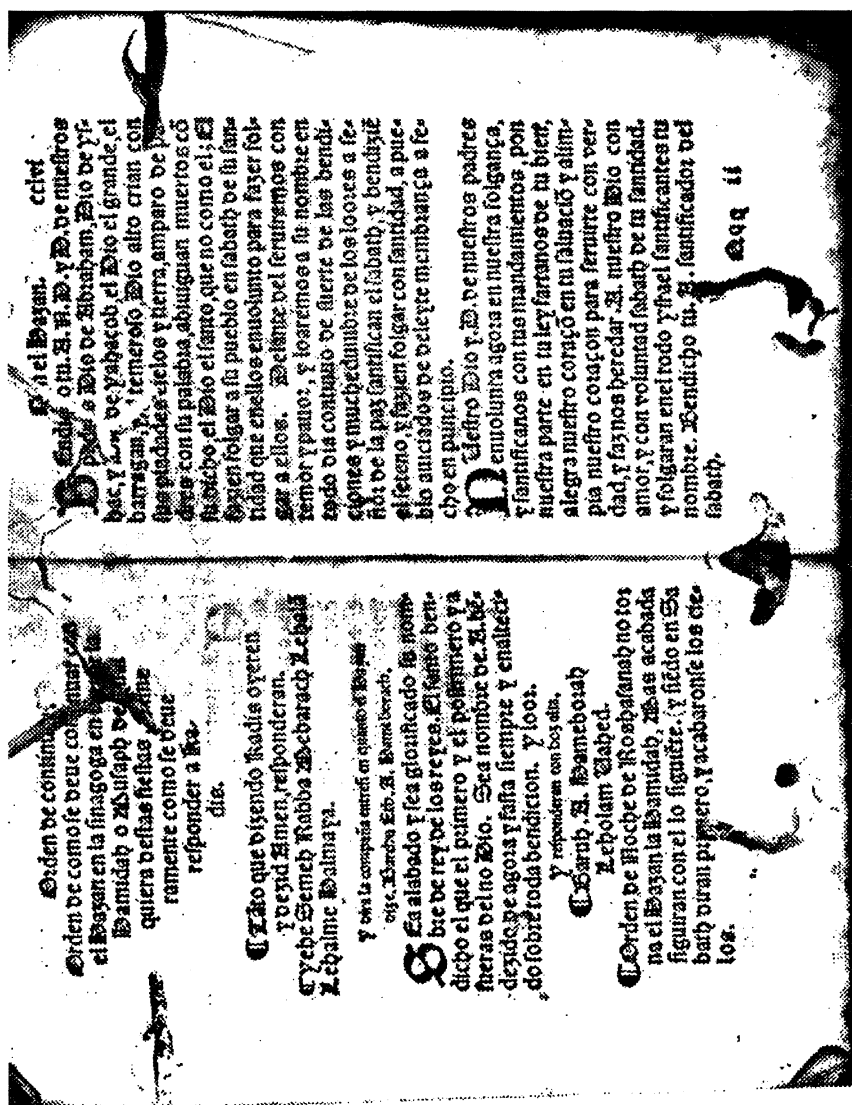


Fig. 5. The *Orden de continuar...siguendo con el Hazan la hamidah* in Abraham Usque's מרחור (=Maḥazor) *De Roshasanah y Kipur trasladado en español y de nuevo emēdado por yndustria y diligēcia de Abraham Usque Bē Selomoh Usque Portugues y estampado em su casa y a su costa. En Ferrara 15 d Elul 5313.*

Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice.

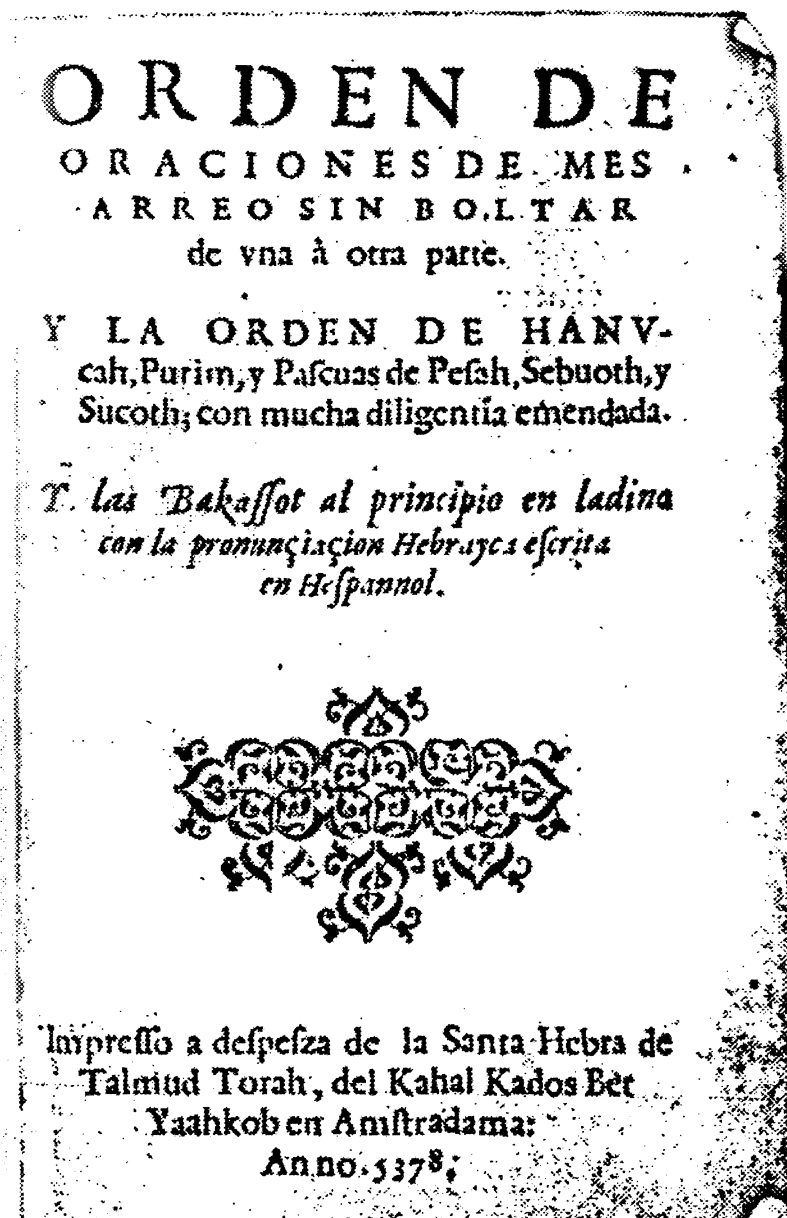


Fig. 6. Title page of the 1618 enlarged edition of the *Orden de Oraciones de Mes Arreo*, published by the *Santa Hebra de Talmud Torah* of the Congregation Bet Yahacob in Amsterdam.

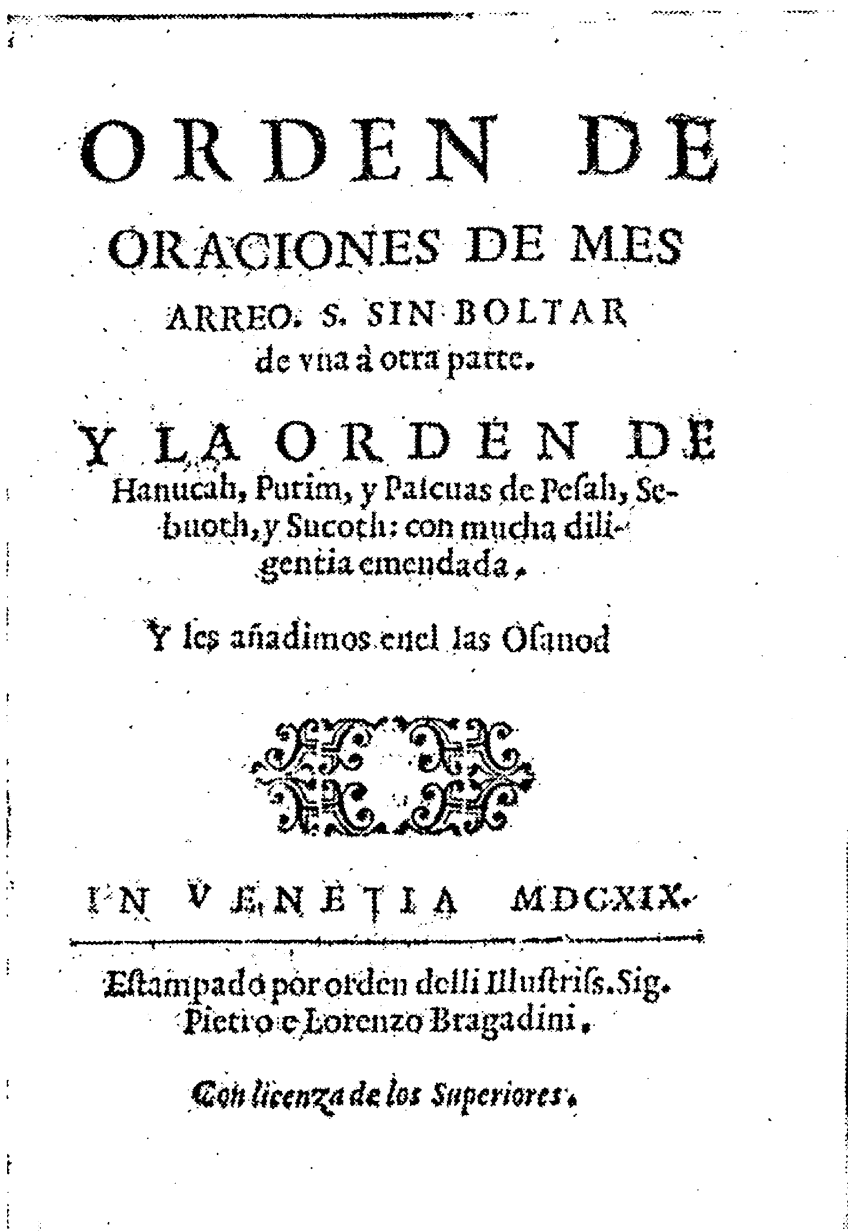


Fig. 7. Title page of the 1619 Venetian edition of the *Orden de Oraciones de Mes Arreo*, reprinted by Pietro and Lorenzo Bragadin.

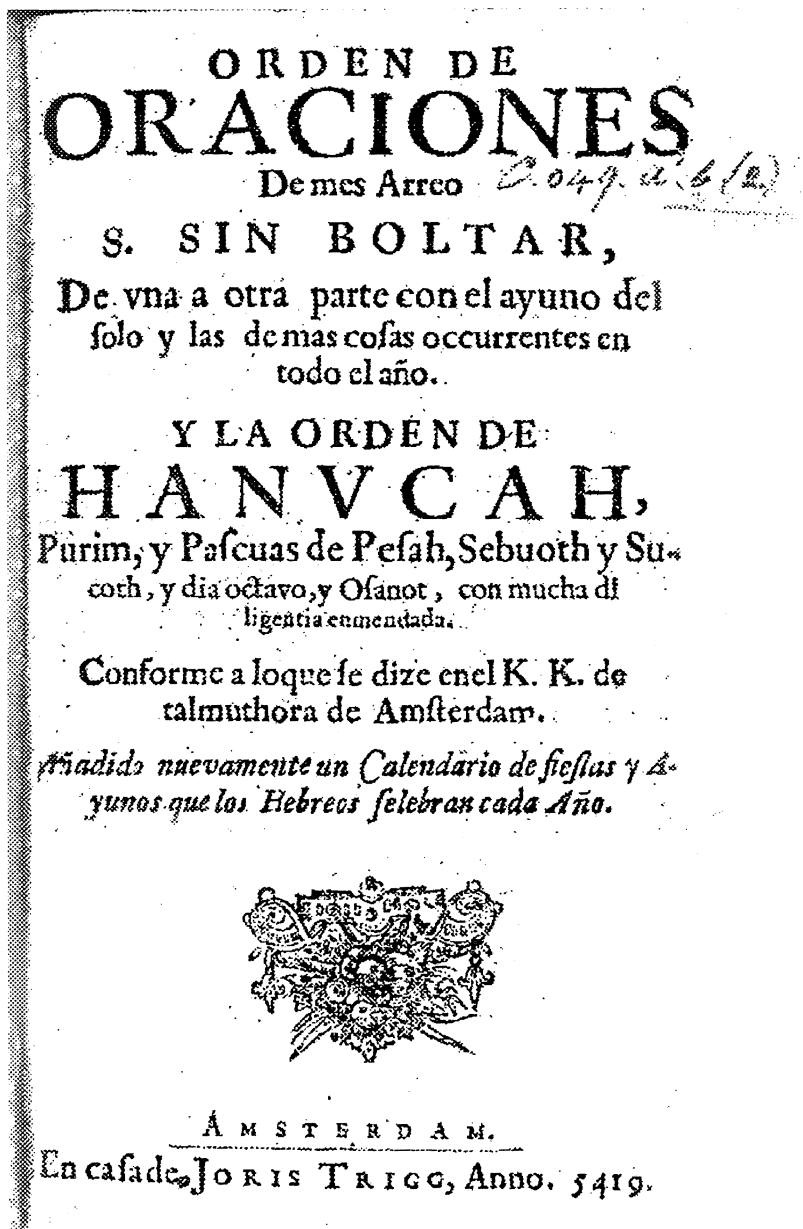


Fig. 8. Title page of a 1659 enlarged edition of the *Orden de Oraciones de Mes Arreo*, published in Amsterdam by Joris Trigg for the Congregation Talmud Torah. Courtesy of the British Library.

RESUMEN

La *British Library* conserva la única copia conocida de un libro de oraciones compuesto en 1555 por Abraham Usque: el *Libro de Oraciones de mes arreo*. Usque era consciente de las dificultades que tenían muchos de los antiguos marranos, aún no familiarizados con la liturgia judía, en seguir el a veces largo y complicado servicio de la sinagoga. Abraham trató de proporcionar una versión simplificada del sidur, y lo abrevió en parte. En el *Prólogo* afirmó que había presentado las oraciones de un modo llano y directo (*arreo*), sin que hubiera necesidad de hojear el libro en busca de la continuación del servicio.

Abraham introdujo en su sidur una nueva oración mediante la cual pedía al Señor que pusiera fin a los sufrimientos de Israel, que elevara a un vástago de David, y que devolviera a Su pueblo su antigua gloria y dignidad. El autor deseaba ofrecer una respuesta reconfortante a los deseos y esperanzas de su generación.

Al igual que los judíos que abandonaron España en 1492, también los marranos portugueses que llegaron a Ferrara a mediados del s. XVI continuaron protegiendo los valores culturales, profundamente enraizados, de su antiguo hogar, y consideraron su salida de la Península Ibérica como un hecho catastrófico.

Abraham Usque pidió al Señor que se contentara con los castigos ya infligidos a Su pueblo y que otorgara su perdón a los hijos de Israel, que ya habían abandonado por completo toda idolatría.

SUMMARY

The British Library owns the only known copy of a prayer-book composed in 1555 by Abraham Usque: the *Libro de Oraciones de mes arreo*. Usque was well aware of the difficulties, encountered by many former Marranos still unfamiliar with Jewish liturgy, to follow the sometime long and complicated synagogue service. Abraham tried to provide a simplified version of the Siddur and abridged some part of it. In the *Prologue* he claimed to have presented the prayers in a plain and straight way (*arreo*): without the necessity of having to leaf through the book to find the continuation of the service.

Abraham inserted in his Siddur a new prayer by which he asked the Lord to put an end to the sufferings of Israel, to raise up a scion of David and to restore His people to its ancient glory and dignity. The Author wanted to provide a reassuring answer to the anxieties and hopes of his generation.

Likewise the Jews who left Spain in 1492, also the Portuguese Marranos who reached Ferrara towards the middle of the XVIth century, continued to cherish the deeply rooted cultural values of their erstwhile homeland and considered their departure from Iberian Peninsula as a most catastrophic event.

Abraham Usque asked the Lord to be content with the punishments already inflicted to His people and to grant His pardon to the sons of Israel who had completely abandoned every idolatric practice.